It's AG Magazine's 15th Birthday! ★ FREE Pet Posters

americangirl.com

American Girl®

January/February 2008

* Bring AG magazine to life at your **slumber party!**

* **4 hairstyles** you'll **love**

* Cute **valentines** to clip and share

Win It! Everything you need to throw a party!

American Girl

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See AG Online!
Visit americangirl.com to peek behind the scenes of AG magazine!
Always get a parent's permission before surfing the Web or giving out your full name, address, or any other personal info.

AG's 15 Years of Friendship
Truths about friendship that *every* girl needs to know

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Hair You'll Love
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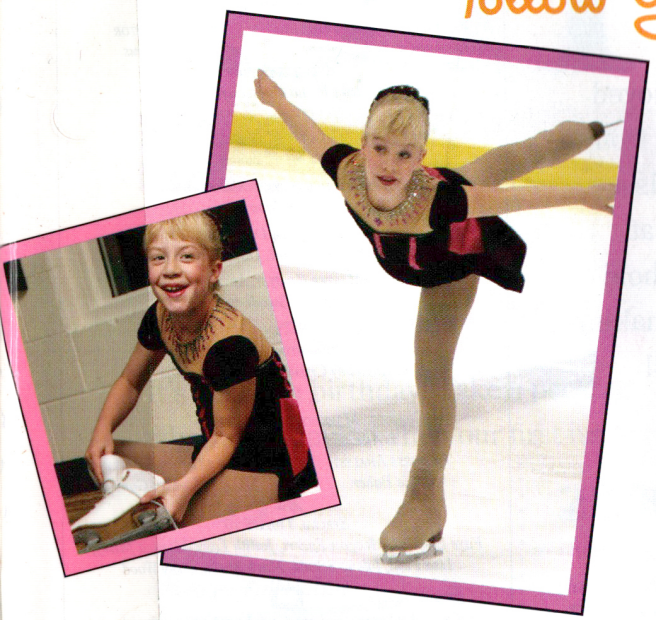
Follow Your Inner Star®



Skating Dreams
Spend a day with a competitive ice-skater.
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About the Cover

Meet Rebecca B., age 11. We asked her about *American Girl* magazine.

Do you subscribe to AG?

Yes, for about the past two years.

What are your favorite parts of AG?

I like the Mini Mag and the "Lunch Box" in Girls Express.

Have you ever entered a contest?

No, but I liked the ones where girls invented theme park rides and designed rainbow outfits!

Rebecca B.

For more about this issue, go to "Behind the Scenes" on page 49.

AG's Birthday Bash
Throw a slumber party that brings your favorite magazine to life!
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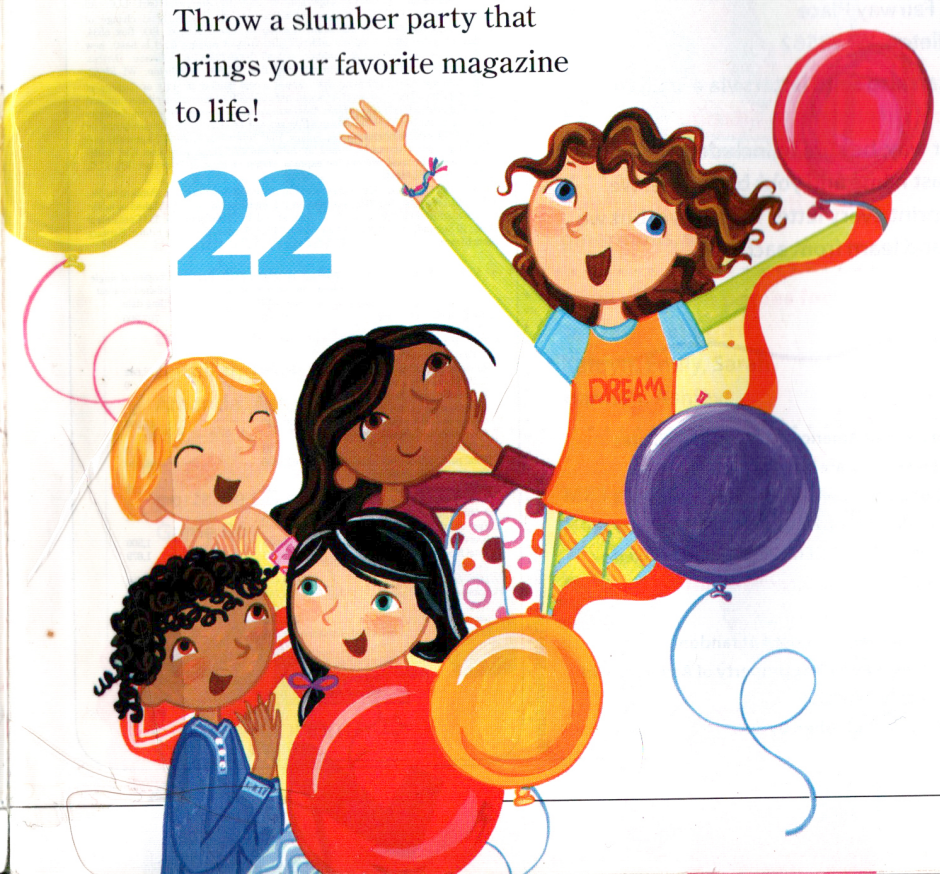

Cover photo: Steven Talley

Letters from You

Times Tables Trick

I really liked the "Hand-y Calculator" from Girls Express in the September/October 2007 issue. It helped me improve my math skills and remember the times tables for 9! Keep up the great work, *American Girl*.

Alyson C.
Age 8, Illinois

Brave Ballerina

I am totally impressed by Reagan W.'s strength from the September/October "I ❤ My School!" I would love to go to a ballet school. Reagan teaches girls that hard work and perseverance pay off in the long run. You go, girl!

Peyton O.
Age 10, Illinois

Cute Craft

My sister and I really enjoyed making the "Tiny Totes" from the September/October issue. We're going to use them at school as coin purses to hold our lunch money. Keep making cool, fun, and easy crafts!

Clara M. :-)
Age 11, New Jersey

Write to Us!

Want to drop us a line? Write us at:

***American Girl* magazine**
8400 Fairway Place
Middleton, WI 53562

You can also send letters via e-mail to readermail@americangirl.com. Either way, be sure to include your first and last name and your birth date. We can't print every letter we receive, but we read and learn from each one.

Win It!

On page 25, you'll read about our latest Win It! contest. To enter, send a postcard by February 15 with your first and last name and address to:

Win It!—J/F 08
***American Girl* magazine**
8400 Fairway Place
Middleton, WI 53562

Official Rules

1. Employees of American Girl and its affiliates and their families are not eligible.
2. Only one entry per family.
3. To be valid, all entries must be received by mail by February 15, 2008. Entries may not be faxed or e-mailed. **A parent or guardian must sign the entry.**
4. One winner will be chosen at random.
5. All entries become the property of American Girl and will not be returned.
6. Void where prohibited by law.

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Winner of a 2006 Parents' Choice Silver Award

American Girl®

Illustrations: Mary Lynn Blasutta

Girls EXPRESS

Then and Now

It's our 15th birthday! Take a peek at what was popular when our first issue came out.

1993

Girls' top TV shows:
Blossom, Full House

New words in the dictionary:
e-mail, snowboard

Most common names for ten-year-old girls:
Jennifer, Jessica, Amanda, Ashley, Sarah

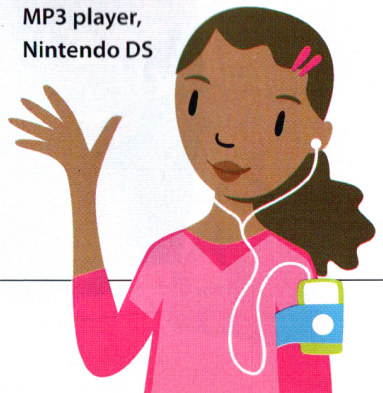
Popular gadgets for girls:
portable CD player, Game Boy

2008

Girls' top TV shows:
Hannah Montana, The Suite Life of Zack & Cody

New words in the dictionary:
ginormous, sudoku

Most common names for ten-year-old girls:
Kaitlyn, Emily, Sarah, Hannah, Ashley

Popular gadgets for girls:
MP3 player, Nintendo DS

Did You Know?

You'll flip for these fun facts!

Lucky Birthday

In China, it's a tradition to give a child a red envelope filled with "lucky money" on the child's birthday. The color red is believed to chase away bad luck. Another birthday tradition in China is to eat soup made with long noodles—which represent long life.

Buzzword

jollification

How to say it:
jol-ih-fih-KAY-shun

What it means: merry celebration or festivity

One way to use it: An invitation to Bella's birthday party meant one sure thing—pure jollification.

The buzzword is tucked into this issue of *American Girl*. Can you find it? The answer is on page 42.

Find It!

Look for fun facts sprinkled throughout the magazine!

Hannah Montana photo: Disney Channel/Bob D'Amico Full House photo: ABC Illustrations: Tracey Wood

Shining Star

Francesca L. got her own camera when she was eight years old, and she loved taking photos. When she asked to see photos of her grandma when she was young, Francesca was surprised to learn that her grandma had only one photo from her own childhood. That's when Francesca got an idea—she'd take photos of people who didn't usually get their photos taken. She wanted them to have photos to show their own grandkids one day.

Francesca's mom helped her get in touch with a local homeless shelter, and the Florida girl set to work. "When I got there, all of the little kids were running around, screaming, 'Take my picture! Take my picture!'" remembers Francesca, age 11. She took almost 150 photos of kids and their families. She then developed all of the photos and put them into small albums for the families to keep.

The people at the shelter were thrilled to get the albums, and one mom even cried with happiness, Francesca says. "I feel really good about what I did, and I hope that they will have these pictures to treasure until they grow old."

You can shine, too.
Become your family's historian. Take lots of photos at family gatherings, and write everyone's names and the event dates on the backs of prints. That way, future generations will know their family history.

True Story

Marki showed her smarts on a popular TV show.

Dear American Girl,

I love going to school. I love playing school at home with my sisters. So imagine how excited I was when I found out after a huge audition that I was going to be on the TV show Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader? It was like going to school as a job!

Being on the show was so much fun. We had to answer the same questions as the adult contestants, and they could copy off us or peek at our answers if they needed help. The hardest questions usually were the fifth-grade ones—sometimes we hadn't studied those subjects yet! It was always funny when my friends had seen the show and I had gotten an answer wrong. They'd say, "Why'd you put that?" And I'd say, "I don't know!"

I miss being on the show, but I know I had to leave—after all, I'm not a fifth grader anymore. But I'm still crazy about school. I think I might even want to be a first-grade teacher someday.

Sincerely,
Marki M.
Age 11, California

Before Marki's TV gig, she appeared on our July/August 2006 cover!

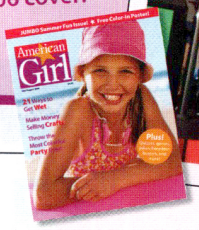


Photo: Mike Yarish/FOX

Heart Art

Turn plain heart stickers into fun doodles.

Banish Boredom

Need some indoor fun this winter? Get your friends together and try out our all-time favorite games from past issues.

Avalanche!

Don't get buried by this balancing game. Collect a bunch of pillows from around the house. Take turns building a tower of pillows. The object of the game is to build the tallest tower without tipping it over. If the tower falls, yell "Avalanche!" The player who builds the tallest tower wins.

Gimme Five

This game will make you slap-happy! Ask your friends to stand in a circle. To start, Player One turns to her left and slaps Player Two's palm. Player Two turns to her left, slaps Player Three's palm, and adds another move to the handshake, like linking pinkies. Player Three slaps the next girl's palm, links pinkies, and adds a new move, like bumping elbows. How long can you keep the handshake going?

Speed Games

Keep your friends on their toes with a board game relay. Set up game stations around the room and put two players at each station. Use games in which you can quickly tell who is ahead at any point, such as checkers. Set a timer for ten minutes, and play the games until the timer runs out. Determine the winner of each game and give her a point. Trade partners and play again. Whoever has the most points at the end of five rounds is the winner of speed games!

✻ All of these games will work with just two people, too!

Cut out your answer and mail it to the address on page 2.

Creative Corner

You'll Glove It

Cut out card. Flip over for directions.

AG Poll

In our July/August issue, we asked you which place you'd pick for a perfect party. Here's what you said:

Castle ballroom 209

Mountain lodge 197

Fancy boat 181

High-rise penthouse 93

Next question:

Which swimsuit would you pick for a sunny beach vacation?

- ✻ Board shorts
- ✻ One-piece
- ✻ Bikini

You'll Glove It

Wear some flair!

Dab craft glue onto the back of a patterned rhinestone sticker. Put a plain knitted glove onto your hand, and attach the sticker to the glove. Remove the glove carefully to let dry. Repeat with the other glove.

Photo: Chris Hynes

American Girl®

Help Wanted!

What's your favorite outfit in your closet right now? Is it a stylish mix of clothing, comfy sweats, or a gorgeous dress that is perfectly you? What makes it your favorite? Send a photo of you wearing your favorite clothes, along with a letter describing the outfit and telling why you love it, to the address on page 2.

Presenting... The Sleepover Show!

One morning after a sleepover, Lindsay W. and Julia S. were helping Lindsay's dad make breakfast. As the girls learned how to make freshly squeezed orange juice, they pretended that they were on a TV cooking show. Some of the juice got spilled, but the girls were onto something fun—they decided to do fake TV cooking shows at all of their sleepovers. The result has been yummy. The 11-year-old New York friends, with help from Julia's little sister, Erika, have developed a huge menu. They make dishes from the list and describe what they're doing for their family-member audience, who later get to eat the delicious results. "We love pretending that we are on TV," Julia says. "Everything we do is just really fun!"

Julia Erika Lindsay

You can have your own cooking-show sleepover—just be sure that you have permission to use the kitchen. You could even videotape your show and watch it later that night!

Need a recipe for your first show? Try this drink—it's tasty and easy!

Sweet Soda Sipper

* Put 3 tablespoons chocolate syrup and a little carbonated water into a tall glass. Stir.
* Add 2 scoops chocolate ice cream. Fill the rest of the glass with more carbonated water.
* Serve with a long spoon and a straw. Yum!

AG Art Gallery

Inspiration for artwork is everywhere—even on our cover!

Sophia S.
Age 12, North Carolina

Katie S.
Age 15, Texas

Audrey B.
Age 12, New York

Kristina P. and Kolina C.
Age 13 and 12, Washington

Isadora M.
Age 11, Florida

We're looking for **artwork** for our gallery. Send color **copies** of your original artwork to the address on page 2. Sorry, we can't return **entries.**

AG Acrostic

Always filled with fun
Makes me read cover to cover
Excellent ideas
Really sweet crafts
I love AG!
Cool contests
Awesome posters
New fashions

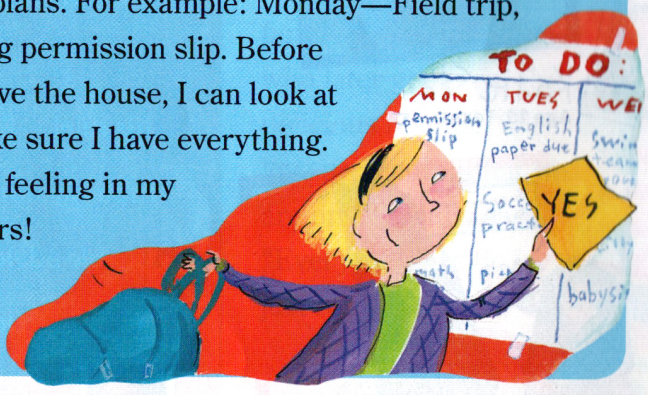
Girls rule!
Inspiring stories
Reliable advice
Laughter galore

Stefi G.
Age 11, Massachusetts

Can't forget!

Forgetting to do something can be frustrating! These girls share their advice on how to remember.

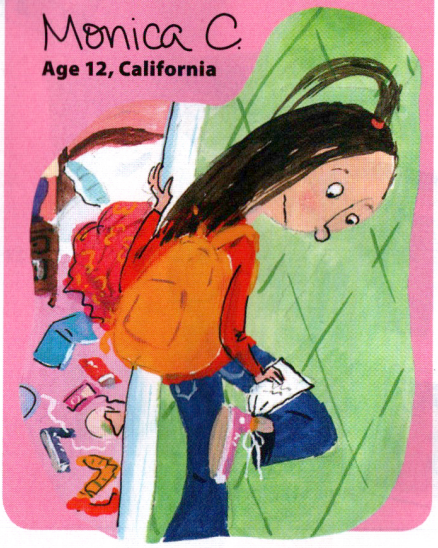
I use a chart that keeps track of my to-do list and my plans. For example: Monday—Field trip, bring permission slip. Before I leave the house, I can look at the chart and make sure I have everything. Then that sinking feeling in my stomach disappears!



Taylor H.
Age 11, Colorado

I'm the kind of girl who forgets to do things in the morning such as grabbing my water bottle. The night before, I make a note and stick it inside of my shoe. The next day when it feels funny in my shoe, I see the note, read it, and remember! I do this until I get the hang of it and remember on my own.

Monica C.
Age 12, California



I used to have a bad habit of forgetting to do things, so I started to carry a pad of paper with me. I can always write down the things I need to remember right away. It helped a lot—I stopped forgetting the things I needed to do!

Nicci C.
Age 11, Georgia

I write down things I need to remember on sticky notes. I stick them to my bathroom mirror so that I will see the notes when I brush my teeth or wash my face in the morning. They are right there for me to read and remember.

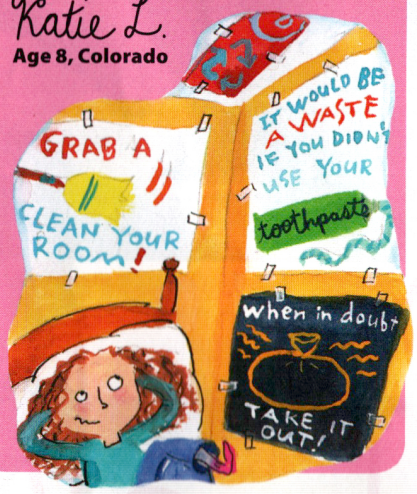
Claire J.
Age 13, Maryland

When I am ready to walk out the door, I do the "five-second checklist." I stop and think what I am going to be doing that day and what I will need. It's fast, it's easy, and it works!

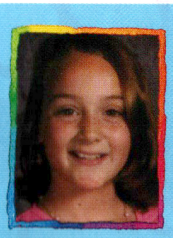
McKenna F.
Age 10, New York

I often forget to brush my teeth, so I made posters to remind myself. I wrote poems and drew pictures that say things such as "It would be a waste if you didn't use your toothpaste!" Now I hardly ever forget.

Katie L.
Age 8, Colorado



Big Truth
Need to remember?
Write it down!



Don't stress if you forget something. If I forget a permission slip or homework, I ask an adult if I can bring it in the next day. If I forget my dance shoes or my instrument, I ask if I can watch during the practice.

Kenzie C.
Age 10, Michigan

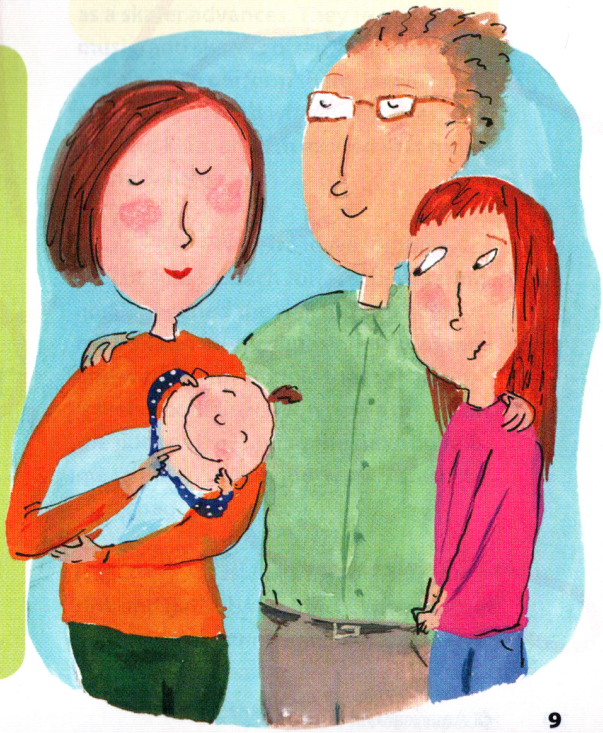
When I have lots of things to remember for school or for a practice, I create a song that is like a musical checklist. I sing all of the things I need to remember to the tune of a nursery rhyme or my favorite song.

Cassidy B.
Age 12, Iowa

Speak from Your Heart

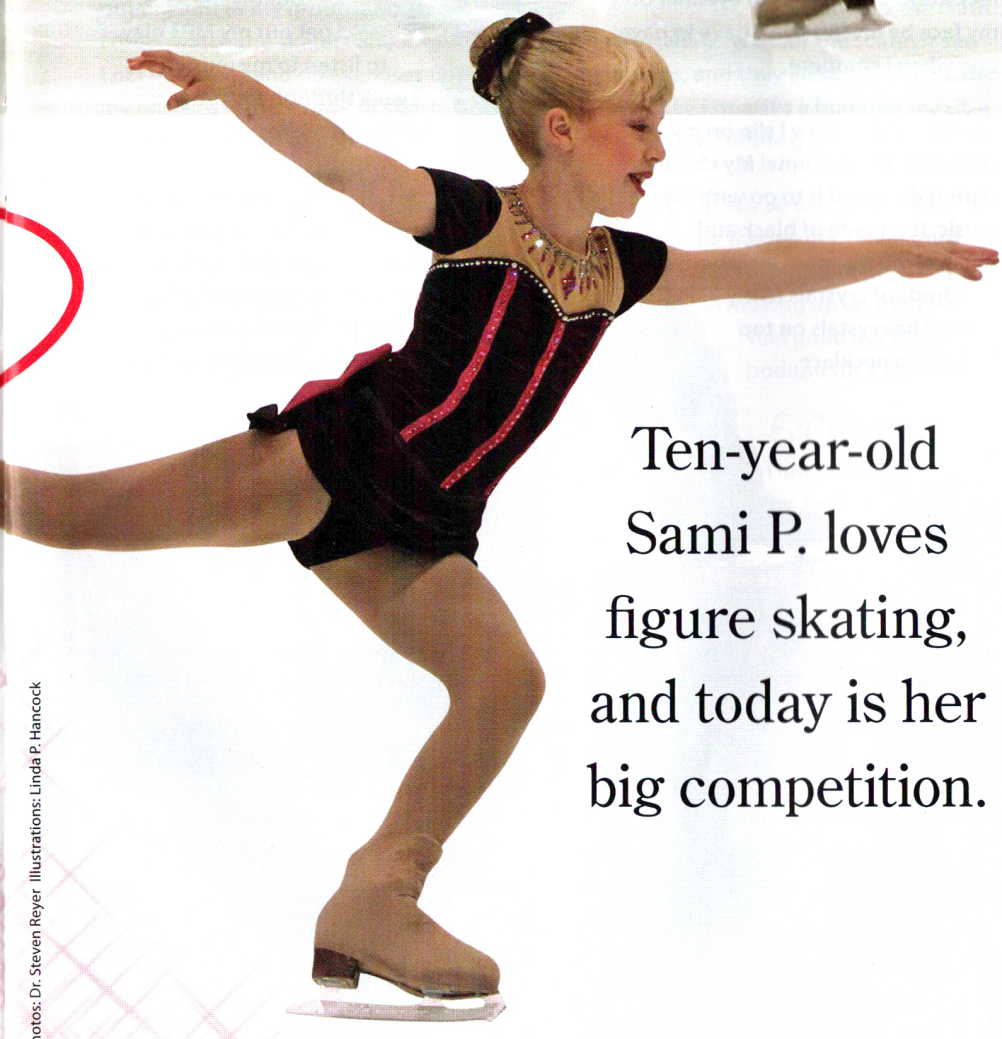
Next subject: Change. A new baby in the family, a move to a new state, or even a set of braces can bring a lot of changes to your life. What is the biggest change you've had to go through? Were you nervous? How did you handle the changes when they finally came?

Send answers, name, birth date, and school photo to the address on page 2. Deadline: February 10, 2008. Some answers will appear in the July/August 2008 issue. ★



Illustrations: Laura Cornell

Skating Dreams



Ten-year-old Sami P. loves figure skating, and today is her big competition.

10:00 A.M. I'm doing my free-skate program in competition later today, and I need to start getting ready. Free-skate programs get longer as a skater advances. They're set to music, and skaters often wear beautiful costumes to perform them. I have been practicing so hard with my coaches, Jon and Blair, and I'm excited that today is finally here.

10:40 A.M. We leave for the practice rink. Coach Jon teaches skating, and he opened the rink today just for me. I skate run-throughs of my program and work on my double toe loop jump. It feels good. Coach Jon sees a penny on the floor as I'm leaving the rink and tells me to pick it up for good luck. I stash it in my bag.

12:00 P.M. Mom and I leave the rink and get subs for lunch. When we get home, I unpack my skate bag and take

Photos: Dr. Steven Reyer Illustrations: Linda P. Hancock

Getting ready

off my costume. I have some free time, so I listen to my favorite music—I like Tim McGraw and Carrie Underwood.

1:40 P.M. Time to get ready for the competition. I skated here last year and won first place, but I've been to tons of competitions since then. I worked on my free-skate program with my coaches four to five times a week for months, and I landed my first good axel—so exciting!

Now, here I am, one year later. I am moving up to the Preliminary division, which means doing axels and double jumps in competition. An axel is the first big jump that you learn after all the other single jumps. Double jumps have two rotations in the air. Yikes!

1:45 P.M. To get ready, the first thing I do is put on a protective wrap, which keeps my foot from getting blisters from my skate. It's become my lucky wrap. (Smelly, but lucky!) Next, I put on footed tights, and then over-the-boot tights, which stretch over my skates when I compete. Those tights hook together underneath my boots.

1:50 P.M. Mom combs a giant glob of gel through my hair. She makes a ponytail on the middle back of my head. Then she slips on my bun form, which is a foam doughnut that helps my hair make a perfect bun. Mom finishes the bun with a hair net over the top to smooth out all the flyaways. The finishing touch? A burst of glitter hairspray.

2:05 P.M. Mom puts on my makeup, including my lucky dot. That's a dot of eyeliner on my face by my left eye. I have to have one when I compete.

2:15 P.M. Now I slip on my costume. It's awesome! My choreographer designed it to go with my music. It is made of black and pink velvet. My mom attached hundreds of crystals to my dress. The crystals on top look like a necklace.

2:20 P.M. I pack up my skate bag, one thing at a time. Music, water bottle, two skates, skate guards, an extra pair of tights, and my MP3 player.

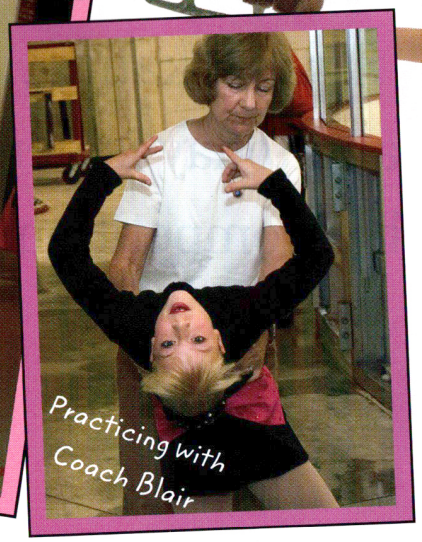
2:30 P.M. We're off! My mom, dad, brothers, and Grammy will all be there today to watch me, along with some family friends.

3:00 P.M. We're here! I see a lot of skaters that I know because my skate club is hosting this competition. When you travel out of town to compete, nobody knows you, but today, we'll all be able to cheer for one another.

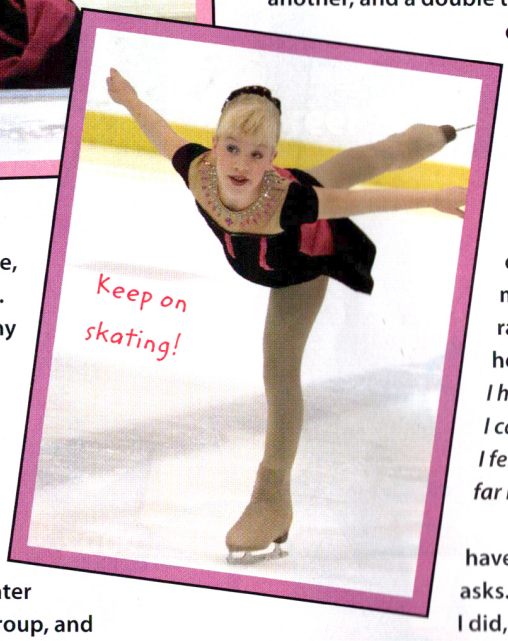
Downstairs, Coach Blair and I find a quiet corner to work on my off-ice warm-up. I jump rope to get my heart rate up and then stretch out my muscles. I get out my MP3 player to listen to my music as I walk through my program—that helps me focus.

4:00 P.M. The announcer says it's time for our warm-up. There are eight skaters in my group, and we go onto the ice together for five minutes. My coaches are rinkside, and they give me

In the zone


Practicing with Coach Blair

Skaters can't use bobby pins to do their hair—if pins were to fall on the ice, they could cause skaters to fall.



advice—what to do next, what to change, what to think about. I land my axel and my double toe loop. Thank goodness!

4:10 p.m.

I wait in the tunnel as I hear the other names announced. I am the seventh skater out of eight in my group, and I don't watch the skaters ahead of me. I pat my knees and do exercises to keep my muscles loose. I have to stay focused and remember what my coaches told me. *I can do it,* I think to myself. *I'm ready.* Suddenly, I hear my name. I take off my skate guards and jacket and step onto the ice. I take my position at the center of the ice, and the music starts. I'm excited. I picture my double jump as perfect as can be, and I envision a winning program. I begin to skate, making sure to keep my speed up and to enjoy myself. I land one axel, then another, and a double toe. But—*oh!* I fall during my second double toe loop. I get up quickly, and I finish strong with another axel. Soon, I am off the ice with a million thoughts racing through my head. *What could I have done better? I can't believe that I fell. But look how far I've come.*

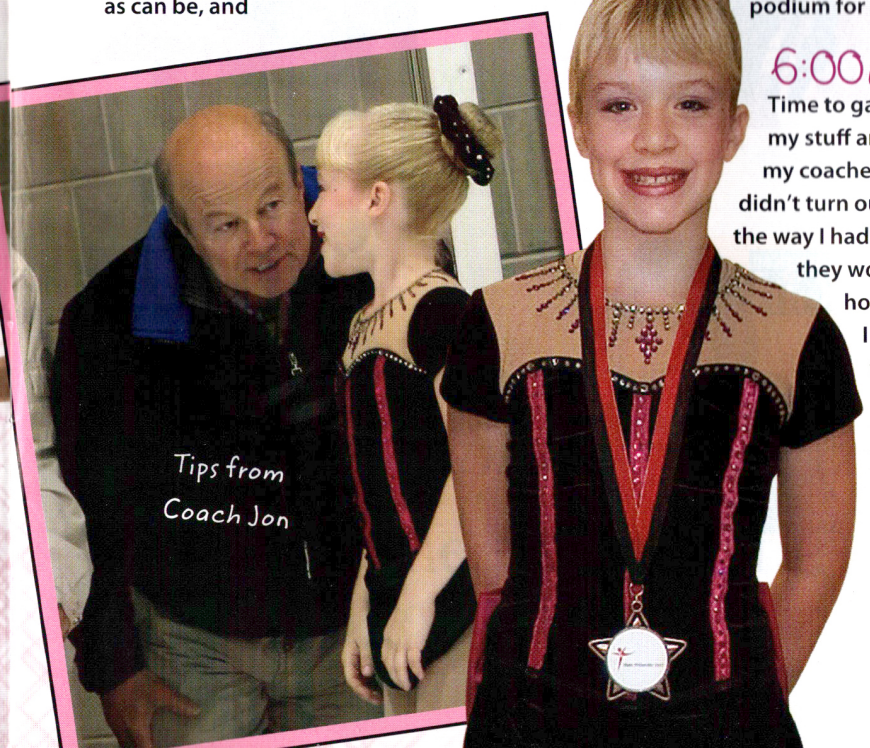
"Did you have fun?" Coach Jon asks. I tell him that I did, and it's the truth. I go upstairs to wait for the scores. I see my friends, and they all say, "Great skate, Sami!" They know it's a bummer to fall, but that's part of the game.

5:00 p.m.

We've waited forever, but here come the results. I took third place. I'm a little disappointed, but I can't forget that I'm moving up another level. I feel good as I take the podium for a medal.

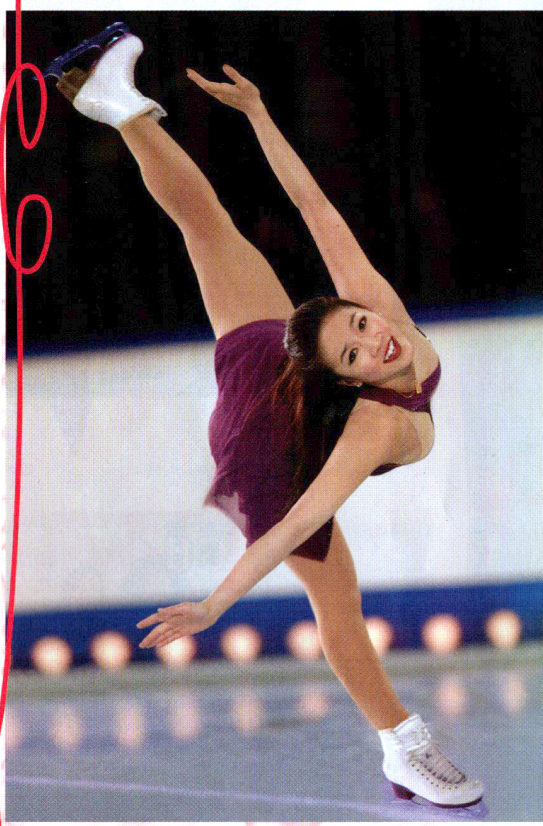
6:00 p.m.

Time to gather up my stuff and thank my coaches. Things didn't turn out exactly the way I had hoped they would, but honestly, I can't wait to skate again.



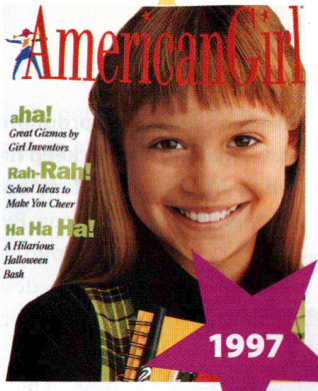
Pro Advice

Michelle Kwan has won more championships than any other skater in U.S. history, but she also has faced her share of obstacles. Here's her advice for staying positive and spirited, either on the ice or in life:

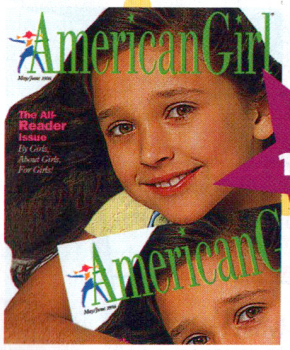


"You can't get anything done when you're frustrated. The emotion overwhelms you instead of being something that can help you. You have to channel that energy into something positive. If you stay positive, you're going to be able to fix that problem or that jump or the issue that you have. Instead of worrying about the negative, focus on the things that you can actually change. And if it's something that you can't change, then you know what? Realize it, and deal with it, and move on."★

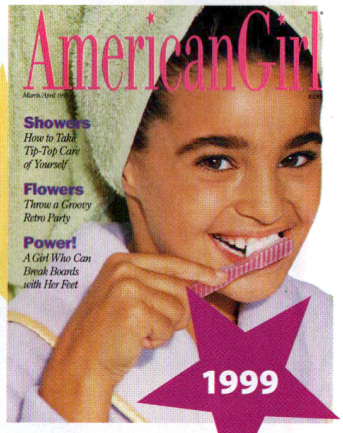
1994



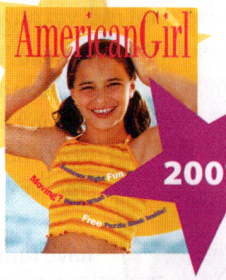
1997



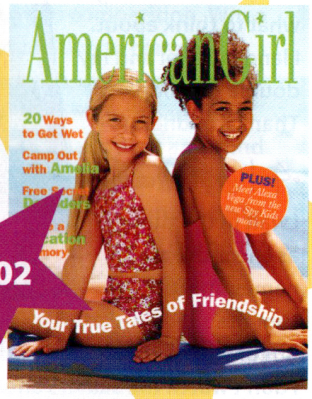
1998



1999

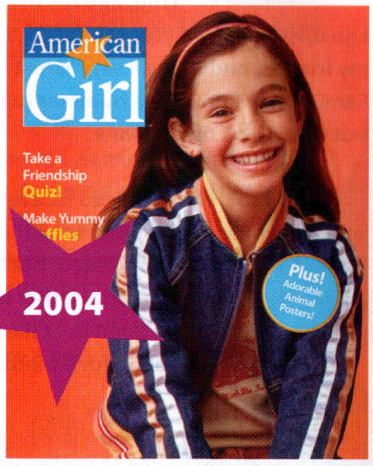


2001



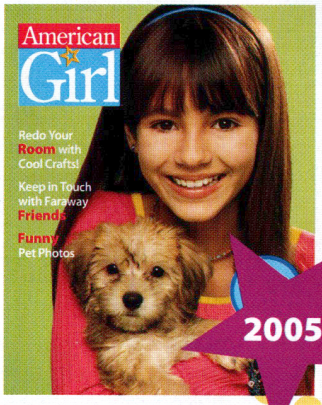
2002

2003

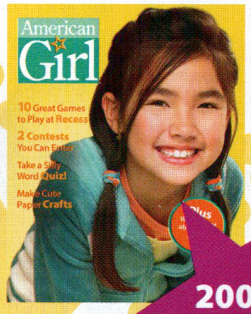


2004

2004



2005



2006

68 Free Stickers! ★ Meet Our Cover Contest Winners
American Girl
True Tales of Friendship
10 Holiday Gifts to Make
Are You a Great Sister? Take Our Quiz

2006

It's *American Girl* magazine's 15th birthday!
Turn the page to start the celebration.

Illustrations: Carol Yoshizumi

Happy Birthday, AG!

We received more than 2,000 birthday cards!
Here are some that made us smile.

Gina K.
Age 11, California

Mia J.
Age 8, Illinois

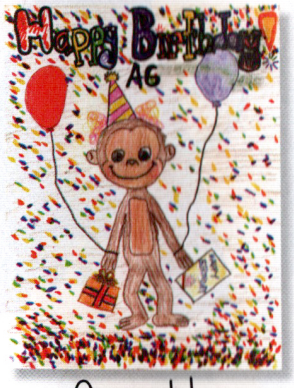
Special Birthday Card Issue
American Girl
Help celebrate American Girl's 15th Birthday
Wish them a "Happy Birthday"
HAPPY 15TH BIRTHDAY

Anna S.
Age 12, Illinois

Blaire B.
Age 11, Georgia

Anna R.
Age 12, Washington

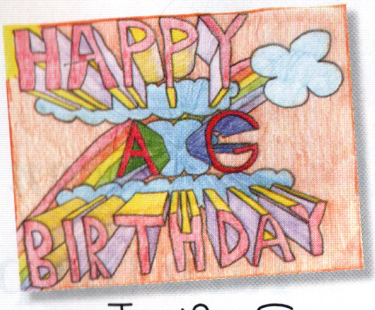
Alyssa F.
Age 10, Ohio



Amy H.
Age 11, Texas

Emma K.
Age 12, Pennsylvania

Brittany J.
Age 9, California

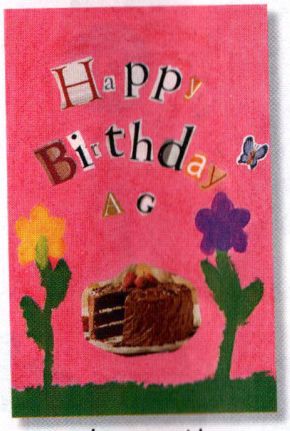


Jennifer S.
Age 12, Pennsylvania

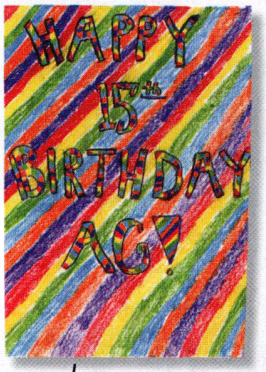
Michaela Z.
Age 9, Connecticut

Kelsey B.
Age 12, New Mexico

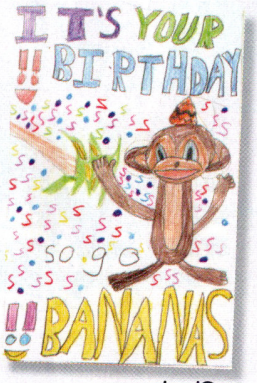
Savannah S.
Age 12, New York



Lauren N.
Age 11, Texas



Victoria R.
Age 11, Minnesota



Margot D.
Age 9, Virginia

Rebecah W.
Age 12, Missouri

Julianna K.
Age 12, Pennsylvania

Madison S.
Age 8, California

Emmie H.
Age 12, Vermont

Design a Pair of Sunglasses

What would the coolest pair of sunglasses on the beach look like? Start by drawing the shape of a pair of sunglasses. Then add doodles, paint, glitter—whatever it takes to create the best-looking shades! Whether they are silly or sweet, send your designs to the address on page 2, along with your first and last name, address, and birth date. Deadline: February 10, 2008. Winners will appear in the July/August 2008 issue. Sorry, we can't return entries.

Photos: Chris Hynes Illustrations: Lauren Scheuer

Quiz

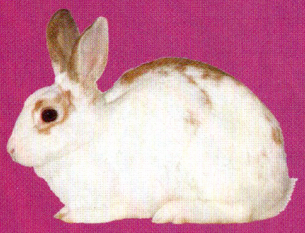
All About AG

How much do you know about *American Girl* magazine? Try this challenge to find out!

1 Which animal has never appeared on an AG cover?

a. Horse

c. Rabbit



b. Dog

d. Duck

2 These days, girls write more letters to which magazine department?

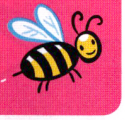
a. AG Poll
b. AG Art Gallery
c. Heart to Heart
d. Help!

3 We've shown a girl wearing a hat only twice on our cover—true or false?

False

4 Which word has never been an AG buzzword?

a. Shenanigans
c. Brontophobia
b. Discombobulate
d. Kismet



5 Sixteen different colors are used to print the magazine—true or false?

False

6 In all, how many issues of *American Girl* magazine have there been?

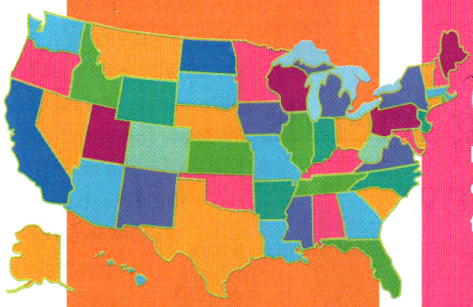
a. 62
c. 75
b. 95
d. 102

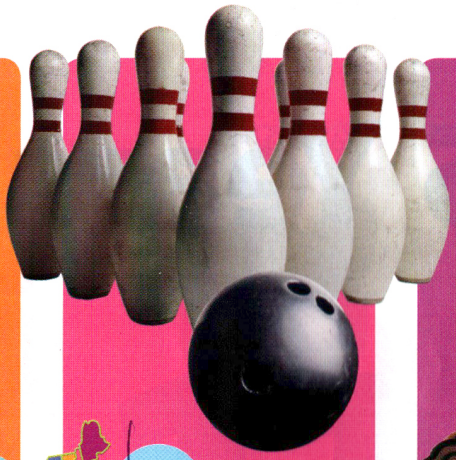
7 The Contest department received the most entries for which topic?

a. Design a beach towel
c. Design a business card
b. Design a watch
d. Design a shoe

8 The state with the most AG subscribers is:

a. New York
b. California
c. Illinois
d. Pennsylvania



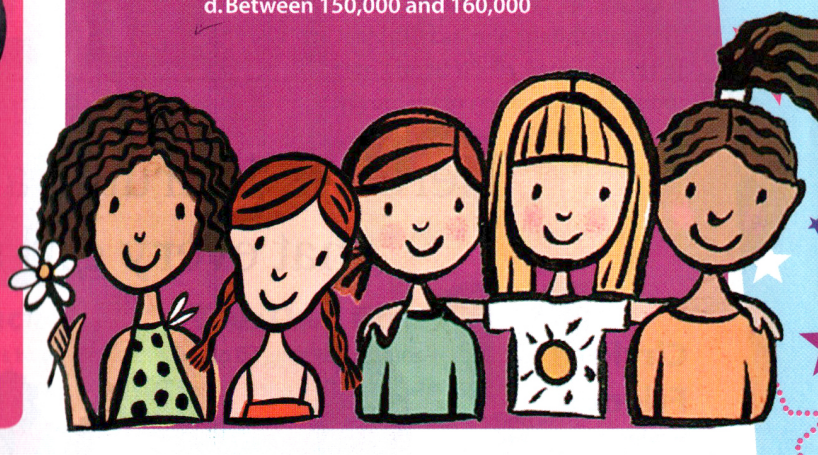


9 AG has had a photo of a bowling ball on its cover—true or false?

True

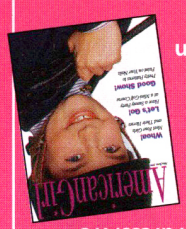
10 AG had about this many subscribers in 1993, its first year in print:

a. Between 8,000 and 9,000
b. Between 45,000 and 50,000
c. Between 90,000 and 100,000
d. Between 150,000 and 160,000



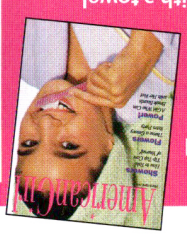
Answers Flip over the magazine to see if you're right!

1. a. The closest we got to a horse cover was our May/June 1999 issue, which featured a girl in equestrian dress. We showed a photo of her with a horse on the table of contents in that issue.



2. d. Over 15 years, AG has received more than 140,000 Help! letters. Believe us, you are not alone in needing advice.

3. False. We've shown caps and hats 16 times on our cover, and that's not counting helmets (we've had three), ear warmers (shown twice), or bath towels (one time). Our March/April 1999 cover showed a girl in a bathrobe with a towel wrapped around her hair.



4. c. *Brontophobia,* by the way, is the fear of thunderstorms. (But it sounds like a fear of dinosaurs, doesn't it?)

5. False. Our printing process uses just four colors of ink to make up every color on our pages. Look closely at a page with a magnifying glass to see all of the tiny dots, which are blue, hot pink, yellow, or black.

6. b. We published bonus issues here and there in the past, but nowadays, we print six issues a year. Our 100th issue will be out this year!

7. a. Readers sent 6,436 entries for our beach-towel contest, which is the most ever for our Contest department. But that doesn't count our last special cover contest, which we launched in November/December 2005. We got a whopping 12,487 entries for that contest!

8. b. But any of those answers would have been a good guess. All of those are states with the highest numbers of subscribers. After California come New York, Pennsylvania, and then Illinois.

9. True! Our January/February 1997 cover model was dressed in a bowling shirt and was holding a teal bowling ball. Strike!

10. d. Wow—160,000 is a lot. But it's nowhere near today's numbers. More than 600,000 of you buy each issue of the magazine, and even more girls read friends' magazines or find us at the library. It means that almost anywhere you go, you should be able to find an AG amiga. ★

Illustrations: Mary Lynn Blasutta

AG's 15 Years of Friendship

Here are 15 truths about being friends that every girl should know.

1 Circle of Friends

Having a variety of friends instead of one best friend is a great way to go. Whether you need to talk or you need a good laugh, your many friends can give you what you need.

2 Agree to Disagree

You and your friend won't always agree, and that's O.K. You can disagree without actually fighting. You can say, "That's one way to look at it, but this is how I see it ..."

3 Boys, Too

Boys can be good friends. Having a boy as a friend is great because you get to see things from his point of view.

4 Be There

When something awful has happened to your friend, just letting her know that you are thinking of her is the most important thing that you can do.

5 Keep It to Yourself

If there's one thing that can make a good friendship go bad, it's gossip. Although it might make you feel smart or closer to a person when you spill something you heard about another friend, don't do it. It's never, ever worth it.

6 Don't Judge

Everybody deserves a chance to be your friend. If you judge someone on what she looks like, you could miss out on a great friendship.

7 Between Us

If you and your friend are having an argument, it's never a good idea to talk about it with other friends.

Older, Younger ... So What?

Age is only a number. Lots of girls have friends who are a few years older or a few years younger than they are.

Shhh

If your friend shares a secret with you, keep it to yourself. She's trusted you with something important.

Me, Jealous?

Jealousy can ruin friendships. Don't let it! When jealousy rises up in you, try to remember the good things you already have—including a great friendship.

In the End

If it's time for a friendship to end, try to let it fade naturally. You may not want to be friends anymore, but you sure don't want to be enemies. Nothing can be gained from being hurtful.

Stay in Touch

If your friend goes to a different school, don't worry—it doesn't have to be the end of your friendship! Stay in touch with phone calls and e-mail, and make plans for weekend fun.

Be Your Own Girl

It's fun to be alike sometimes—to like the same food, the same books, or the same clothes—but it's better for each friend to develop her own personal style.

Don't Cling

A friendship can end fast when one person is overwhelmed by another. Giving your friend some space can help keep a friendship healthy and happy.

Just say "Hi!"

Taking the first step can feel awkward, but if you can start up a conversation with someone, you'll be surprised at how quickly you can become friends. ★

Illustrations: Cathi Mingus

AG's 15th Birthday Bash!

Bring AG magazine to life with this fun-filled slumber party.

Invitations

Invite your friends to the slumber party with a special AG magazine card on **americangirl.com**. Tell friends to bring school photos with them and to be prepared for a night of jollification!

Buzzword

Pick a buzzword such as **"party"** or **"sleeping bag."** As your guests arrive, give each girl two plastic party necklaces to wear. Tell her the buzzword—the catch is that she may not say it! If she does, she has to give a necklace to whoever caught her saying the buzzword. Whoever has the most necklaces by bedtime wins!

Photo Shoot Fun

Set up a photo shoot for a pretend cover of *American Girl* magazine. Create a scene by hanging up a colored sheet or decorating the corner of a room with silly props. Assign a job to everyone—you'll need cover models to pose in the photo, stylists to fix the clothing and hair, and photographers to capture great photos. Make sure everyone gets a chance to pose for the cover. Send us copies of your best shots!

Friendship Snack Mix

This mix is more than just a snack—it's a recipe for a great friendship, too! Share the meaning behind the ingredients while you eat with your pals.

- Peanut butter and chocolate candy: Friends act nutty!
- Pretzels: Friends bend over backward for each other.
- Marshmallows: Friends stick together.
- Teddy bear-shaped graham crackers: Friends give bear hugs.
- Chocolate morsels: Friends are sweet.
- Popcorn: Friendships start as small as a kernel—and then grow!

Creative Corner

Set up a real Creative Corner—all you need is a table, some craft supplies, and a few great ideas:

Sunglasses Challenge

Set up the table with lots of colored paper, glitter, markers, and any other craft supplies you have. Each person gets to design a pair of sunglasses—flip to page 17 for the details. Collect everyone's entries and then submit them to us at the address on page 2!

Behind the Scenes

Personalize a mini bulletin board with your favorite things. Decorate a small piece of corkboard with colored paper squares and circles. Duct tape a ribbon loop to the back of the corkboard so that you can hang it when you're finished. Use stickers or colored pens to spell out your name. Now add memories, quotes, and trinkets. Add photos after the party.

Friendship Knot Bracelet

Create a friendship bracelet that ties all of you together! Let each of your friends choose her favorite colored ribbon. Ask her to cut a ribbon for each person at the party. It should be long enough to wrap around her wrist twice. Pass out the ribbons so that everyone has one of each color. For each bracelet, match up the ends of the ribbons and tie them in a knot. Tape the knotted end of the ribbon to a table, or ask a friend to hold it. Now, tie a knot about every ½ inch. Ask a friend to tie the bracelet around your wrist.

True Story?

One girl stands up and tells three stories about herself, two of which are false and one that is true. Everyone gets a chance to guess which story is true before the storyteller reveals the answer. Give each girl a chance and see who is the best at bluffing!

AG's Chatter Boxes

Cut out the insert and put together the Chatter Boxes. Play with them while you're waiting for other people to finish their crafts.

Crazy for Quizzes

Take the quiz starting on page 18 or go to "Fun for Girls" at americangirl.com to take a quiz and see what job at *American Girl* magazine would be best for you.

Cover Girl Key Chain

Buy small photo-frame key chains. Cut out the AG logos at the top of this page and glue one to the corner of each school photo. Now slip your school photo into the frame—you're on the cover of *American Girl!*

Illustrations: Carol Yoshizumi

Breakfast Parfait Bar

Make a breakfast bar by setting out bowls with different yogurts, fruits, and cereals. Provide small plastic cups so that everyone can test different combinations—just choose a fruit, add a layer of yogurt, and then top it off with some cereal! Pick at least one from each column, but the more the better:

Fruit

- banana slices
- strawberry slices
- raspberries
- pineapple chunks
- blueberries

Cereal

- Trix
- Cinnamon Toast Crunch
- Cheerios
- Rice Krispies

Yogurt

- chocolate
- vanilla
- mango
- strawberry

Enter to win a box full of party supplies for a perfect slumber party and an *American Girl* magazine planner! Go to page 2 to find out how to enter. ★

Hair You'll Love

New styles that you can do—and cute crafts, too!

Twists

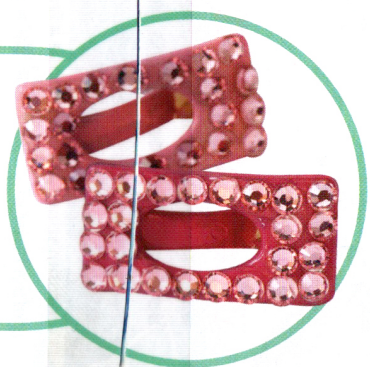
1 Part hair. Starting on one side, divide hair into 2 sections. Twist each section tightly all the way down, twisting away from the face.

2 Cross the back twist over the front twist and wrap twists together. Secure with a hair elastic. Repeat steps 1 and 2 on the other side of the head.

Bright Barrette

Use jewel glue to attach rhinestones or flat-backed crystals to a plastic hair clip. Let dry.

Tip: Use a hair clip that is not flexible.



Photos: Jose Martinez Styling: Jennifer Brent, Judy Redder Illustrations: Shawn Banner

That's a Wrap!

1 Pull hair up into a high ponytail on top of your head. Secure with a hair elastic.

2 Separate a section of hair from the underside of the ponytail. Wrap it tightly around the elastic to cover it. Secure ends of hair with a bobby pin.

Band Aid

Place a piece of double-stick tape on each end of a thin headband. Knot novelty craft yarn around one end of the headband and start wrapping yarn. When you get to the other end of the headband, tie a double knot.

A Pretty Pony

1 Part hair on one side. Separate one small section of hair at the hairline. Braid hair all the way down. Secure with a hair elastic.

2 Sweep braid and loose hair into a low side ponytail. Secure the ponytail and the braid together with a hair elastic. Comb loose ends.

Sparkle Scrunchie

Cut about nine 6-inch pieces of organdy ribbon. Tie each ribbon piece tightly around a hair elastic, covering the metal part.

Sweet Style

1 Separate a section of hair at the top of the head near the face. Twist hair tightly and secure on the side of the head with a clip.

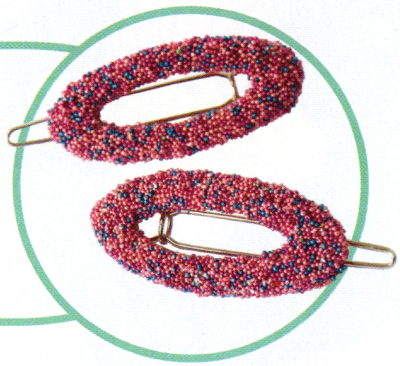
2 Separate another section of hair below the first section. Twist hair tightly. Combine the twist with the ends of the first twist and secure with a clip. Gently comb out loose ends of twists.

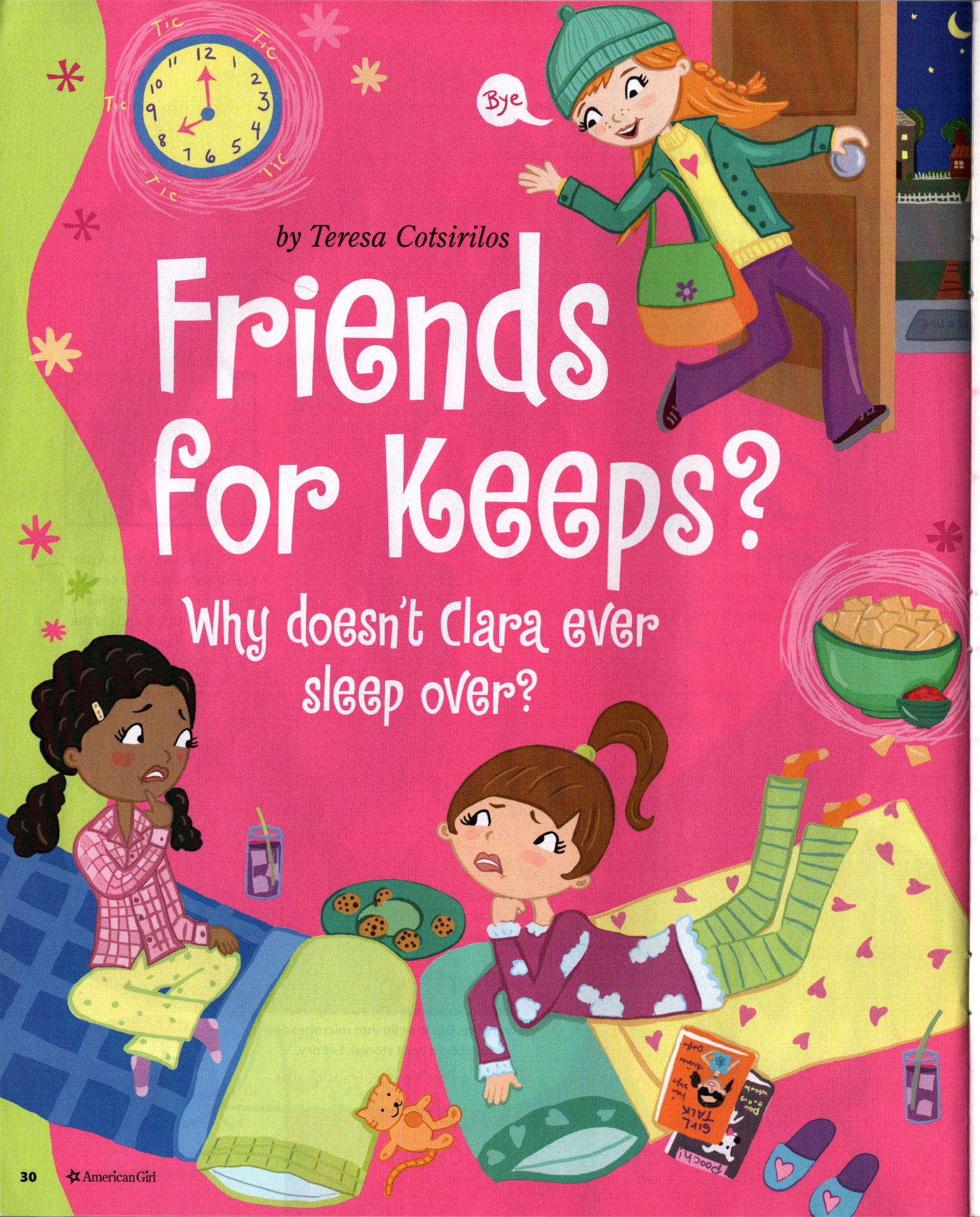
What do you think of these styles? Write to the address on page 2 and let us know! ★

Colorful Clips

Coat the top of a plastic hair clip with jewel glue. Dip the clip into microbeads (available at craft stores). Let dry.

Tip: Use a hair clip that is not flexible.




Tic
Tic
Tic
Tic
Tic
Bye
by Teresa Cotsirilos
Friends for Keeps?
Why doesn't Clara ever sleep over?
GIRL TALK
Pooch!

It was a normal Friday night for Jenny, Clara, and me sometime in early February. We were sitting on sleeping bags on the floor of Jenny's living room, leaning up against the faded paisley couch and sipping cocoa. Stretched out before us was a detailed map of Jefferson Elementary School, which we had sketched patiently onto a large sheet of butcher paper. Clara, Jenny, and I were now making Jefferson Elementary into the school that we wished we went to, penciling in fun trapdoors and waterslides, underground tunnels and a puppy room. Jenny was usually the one who came up with the crazy ideas for our sleepovers, but I'm proud to say that this time the idea was mine.

Clara went to the kitchen for a refill on her cocoa. When she came back, she began to take a giant step across the map but wobbled, barely managing to keep her balance. I made a face. Clara somehow managed to be a star basketball player and a total klutz at the same time.

"Anya, I will not mess up the map!" Clara said to me, pretending to be offended.

"You'll spill cocoa on it like last time," I said. "Do you know how much Wite-Out I had to put on the science building?"

"You're pretty gawky sometimes," Jenny said. Clara's smile faltered—Jenny was famous at school for stating her mind in uncomfortable ways. "But you make up for it with your total awesomeness," Jenny added. Clara's grin came back.

"O.K., on the count of three," said Clara, raising one foot high. "One!"

"Save the map!" Jenny yelled. The two of us leaned forward and covered it with our arms.

Clara groaned. "Ugh, you're making me laugh too much and I can't do it now!"

"Couldn't you just walk around us?" I asked.

"Two!" said Clara, extending her leg. She was interrupted by the honk of a car horn outside.

Jenny looked up and went to the window. "Hey, Clara," she said, and I could tell that she was trying to keep from sounding disappointed. "Your mom's here."

"Oh, good. It's eight o'clock," said Clara. Within moments, she had slipped her sneakers back on and grabbed her backpack. "You guys keep working on the map, O.K.?" she said and hugged us both. "Who's having the party next week?"

"I'll do it," I said. "I think it's my turn."

"O.K., then. This was a great idea, Anya!" And Clara swung out the door and ran to the curb where her mom's station wagon was waiting, slamming the door behind her.

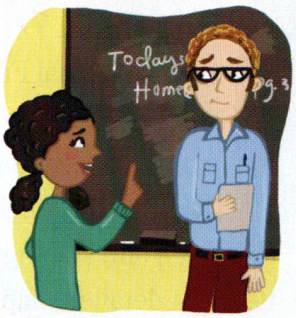
"I wish she didn't do this every time," Jenny said.

Illustrations: Cathi Mingus

"I just wish she'd tell us why she always has to leave," I said.

If it hadn't been for a diorama of the Boston Tea Party, Clara and Jenny and I might never have become friends. At the beginning of fifth grade, I always ate lunch with a group of quiet girls like me—girls who sat against the chain-link fence and read fat fantasy books at recess, and who finished their homework at school in obsessively neat and lovely handwriting. Clara hung out with the other girls from the basketball team. It was just a fluke that basketball games were the only times when she didn't crash into things, and she was the only kid in the fifth grade who could sink jump shots from halfway across the court. More importantly, though, she was one of those rare people who is popular and friendly at the same time.

Jenny had just moved here from Arkansas, and she had already made a name for herself by always saying exactly what she thought. She was famous for once telling ornery Mr. Thomas that there is more than one correct way to spell *Sacagawea*. He didn't believe her at first, but when he checked, he admitted—in front of the whole class!—that she was right and he was wrong. I think everyone was always waiting to see what she'd say next.



So I thought that Mr. Thomas was crazy when he put the three of us in a group together for that history project. And when Jenny invited us over to her house to work on it, the three of us were silent for the whole car ride, awkwardly fidgeting with the zippers on our jackets and staring out the windows.

But once we started working on the diorama, one thing just led to another. None of us really knows what clicked—the only thing we remember talking about was how much we all hated making dioramas—but by dinner that night we were joking like old friends. It was a Friday, so after our project was done, Jenny invited us to sleep over. And at eight o'clock that night, Clara went home.

"I just wish she'd tell us why she always has to leave," I said to Jenny the next Friday at my house, after Clara had left. We were tucked in our sleeping bags and staring at the ceiling. "There just *has* to be a reason," I whispered.

After a pause, Jenny said, "Maybe Clara's scared of the dark."

"That's silly," I said. "We sleep with the lights off whenever we're over at her house."

"Well, she would turn them off over there, wouldn't she?" Jenny said. "Maybe she's embarrassed about it and doesn't want us to know. What do you think?"

"Maybe she's a spy who has to work late on Fridays with the rest of her spy family," I said.

"Come on, Anya, be serious." She poked me

with her elbow.

"Wouldn't it be cool if she were, though?" I said, lost in the fantasy of Clara and her family on a secret mission.

Jenny was quiet awhile, and for a second I thought she might have drifted off to sleep. Then she said, "O.K., then. I think that Clara goes home early to hang out with the girls from the basketball team instead of us. There. I've said it."

I bit my lip and studied the ceiling. Though I never would've admitted it to Jenny, I was scared of the same sort of thing. For the fact of the matter was that whenever Clara went home early, it reminded me that we hadn't been friends for very long. Everyone at school seemed to consider her a friend, and she didn't always sit with us at lunch. We never would have spoken to one another if it hadn't been for that diorama, and I still thought that Clara (and Jenny, too, for that matter) were way too cool to be hanging out with a quiet kid like me.

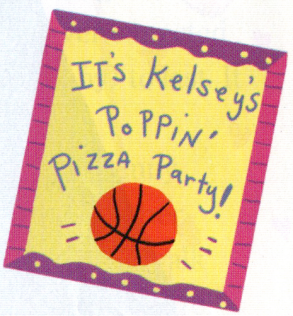
"That's not true, Jenny," I said shortly, rolling over to go to sleep. "That is definitely not true."

The next Friday's sleepover was at Clara's house. For a while we had a great time. It was tradition for us to bake whenever the sleepover was at Clara's—and to sneak downstairs early in the morning, just in time to catch her dad stealing a slice of whatever we'd made. This time we made a chocolate layer cake, with help from Clara's mom. While it was baking, Clara turned on some salsa music, and we unfurled our fantasy school map again and got to work. The fun kind of stopped for me when I went to the kitchen to get us some soda. Clara's family's fridge was a haphazard collage of free magnets,

postcards, and comics clipped from the newspaper. As I opened it, I saw an invitation clinging to the door that I hadn't noticed before. IT'S KELSEY'S POPPIN' PIZZA PARTY! it read in big letters, and there was a picture of a basketball on the front.

I hesitated, and then I took the card off the fridge and opened it. "Hey, Clara!" I shouted into the next room, trying to make it sound like a joke. "Do you like poppin' pizza parties?"

Clara laughed. "Oh, yeah, that card's from someone on the basketball team." Looking back at the school map, she said, "How about we put a magic tree house behind the office?"



"What?" I heard Jenny say.

I skimmed the inside of the invitation. "It's next Friday at seven o'clock," I said. "Are you gonna have to miss the sleepover?"

"No," she said.

"You could still make the party if you left the sleepover early," Jenny said quietly.

If Clara had heard her, she pretended not to. "Hey, come on," she said. "Where's that soda?"

We went to bed late after watching a movie and eating cake. "Do you want to sleep with the light on or off?" Jenny asked Clara delicately. I waited to hear what she'd say, hoping beyond hope that she'd say "on," and that would tell us what the problem was.

"Off," said Clara, looking confused. "I always sleep with the lights off. Unless you want to sleep with them on," she added quickly.

"You're lucky," Jenny whispered to me after Clara was asleep. "I really wish I could believe Clara is a secret spy." I felt too much like crying to properly answer her.

At recess on Monday, we ate lunch outside on the steps of the gym and watched the third graders play a game of four square. "Oh," Clara said abruptly, "sorry about this—my mom says I can't have the sleepover at our house again this week."

"Not at your house?" Jenny said.

"Yeah," said Clara, "we're having the upstairs bathroom remodeled or something, and so it's going to be a huge mess. It's your turn next, Anya. You wanna have it at your place?"

We certainly could have. But I hadn't forgotten the Poppin' Pizza Party and impulsively wanted to sleep over at Clara's again, just so she'd have to spend the whole night with us. "Are you sure we can't just stay downstairs?" I pleaded.

"Well, I think that's fine, but my mom said it wasn't O.K.," said Clara. "Come on—it's not like my house is so special. What's wrong with your house?"

I felt the heat rising to my face and hoped I wasn't blushing. "Yeah, well," I muttered, fidgeting with my hair, "I don't feel like hosting this week."

Clara furrowed her eyebrows. "What's up?" she asked. "You sound mad."

"We'll do it at my house," said Jenny.

"I think it's dumb for us to talk about this."

"You know, we wouldn't even be talking about this if you weren't trying to ditch us for that basketball party!" I mumbled to Clara.

There was a very awkward silence. I hadn't meant to sound as angry as I did—I'm usually too shy to snap at anybody. Almost as soon as I had said it, I wanted to lie to Clara and say I was just kidding and pretend it never happened. But Clara was looking at me as if she hadn't yet decided how to look at me, and the silence told me that I couldn't take it back.

"What are you talking about?" Clara said finally. "I already told you, I'm not going."

I felt terrible but didn't want to show it. "It's fine," I said. "Forget it. It's not your fault that people like you better than they like us and that you have other friends. I hope your party is really poppin'."

"Stop it!" Jenny said. Clara breathed in sharply through her teeth, got up, and walked away. She stumbled quickly toward the basketball courts. As I watched her go, I felt my throat stop up and the bottom of my stomach fall, but I didn't go after her. It was then that I realized that I'd never expected my friendship with Clara (or with Jenny) to last. It had seemed too good to be real.

"Aren't you going to go talk to her?" Jenny asked shrilly. I shrugged. Jenny smacked her forehead with her hand. "You are going to walk right over there and talk to Clara and apologize!" she shouted, so loudly that the girls playing four square turned to stare at us.

"It's not important," I said.

"Not important? The two of you are my best friends!" Jenny shouted. She grabbed me by the wrist and yanked me to my feet. I looked hesitantly into her desperate face. She was so independent, I'd never realized how much she cared about us.

"Basketball courts!" Jenny said. "We're going! Right now!"

Clara wasn't playing basketball when we found her. She was sitting propped up against the chain-link fence near the courts, trying to look as if nothing was wrong. She pointedly looked away when we walked up to her. Jenny stepped forward. "We have something to say," she said.

I fidgeted with a strand of my hair and stared at the ground. Then I swallowed and said, "I'm sorry. I thought you lied about not wanting to go to the pizza party."

Clara still wouldn't look at me. "I told you I wasn't going," she said.

"I know," I said. "I'm sorry I didn't believe you."

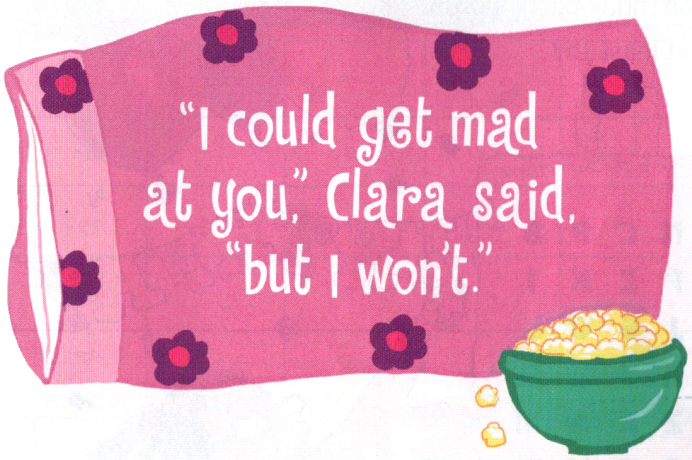
"But why didn't you believe me? Why would I lie about something like that?" Clara asked.

"Well, Jenny and I thought that you always leave the sleepovers early so that you can hang out with your other friends. I just thought you'd do that to go to the party, too," I said.

"You guys thought that?" Clara said softly. Jenny and I shuffled uncomfortably. Clara wrinkled her eyebrows, took another bite out of her sandwich,

and chewed carefully. "I could get mad at you," she said finally. "I could. But I won't, because I can see why you guys thought that. For the record, though, I would never ever do that. You guys are my best friends."

Jenny grinned at her. I hesitated, but then smiled too. We sat down next to her. "So why *do* you leave early?" I asked her.



"I—I'm sorry. I should've told you," Clara said. "It's because … O.K., promise you won't laugh."

"We won't," Jenny said.

"I just … can't seem to do it," Clara said, shrugging stiffly. "Sleep over at someone else's house, I mean. I keep trying to," she added quickly. "I try to sleep over somewhere without my parents at least once a year. But every time I do it, I just start feeling sicker and sicker, and I always end up calling my mom to come pick me up. Last summer, my dad even had to come pick me up from my grandparents' house. In the middle of the night. It was really embarrassing." Clara looked up at us defiantly.

"That's why you leave early?" I asked. "You get homesick?"

"Yes," Clara said, turning red. "But I get it really bad. And I know it's a little-kid thing, so you guys can laugh as much as you want."

"We're not laughing," I said. "Why didn't you just tell us?"

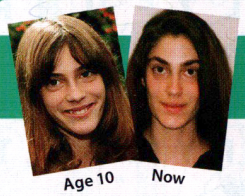
"Yeah," said Jenny. "Anya actually thought you were a spy."

"What?" Clara asked, giggling. I blushed and elbowed Jenny in the ribs.

We finished our lunches there as Clara eagerly asked me about her imaginary life as a spy. We tried to forget about those paralyzing ten minutes when it seemed as if we'd stopped being friends.

Years have passed, but I still remember the first time I thought that maybe I was just unbelievably lucky and Clara and Jenny were my friends for keeps. *This is only going to get better,* I thought. And it has. ★

About the Author



Teresa Cotsirilos

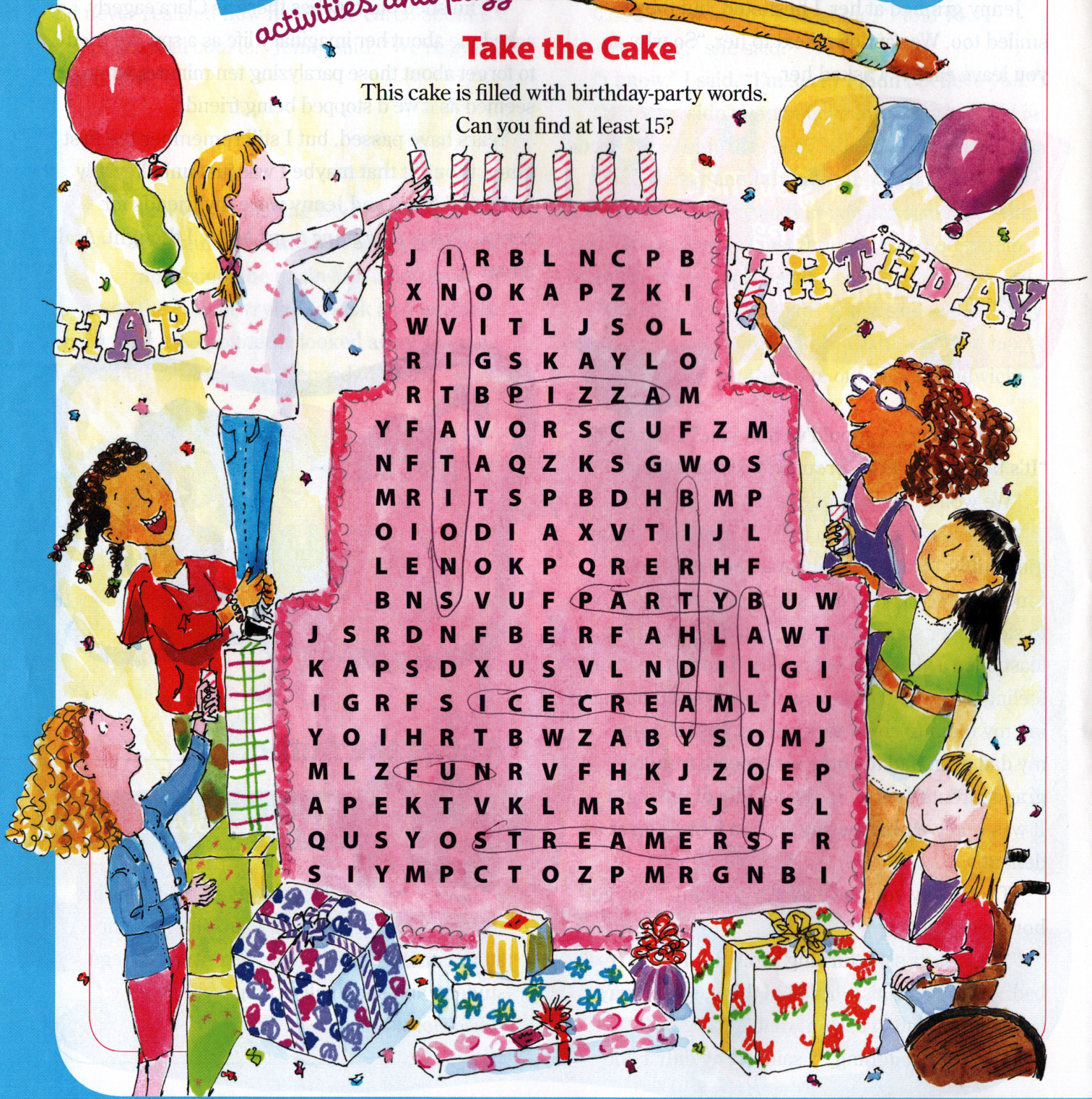
Teresa was an AG magazine reader when she was a girl, and she won our story contest—twice! Now Teresa is a college student, and she's still writing wonderful stories for us.

Brainwaves

activities and puzzles

Take the Cake

This cake is filled with birthday-party words.
Can you find at least 15?


J I R B L N C P B
X N O K A P Z K I
W V I T L J S O L
R I G S K A Y L O
R T B P I Z Z A M
Y F A V O R S C U F Z M
N F T A Q Z K S G W O S
M R I T S P B D H B M P
O I O D I A X V T I J L
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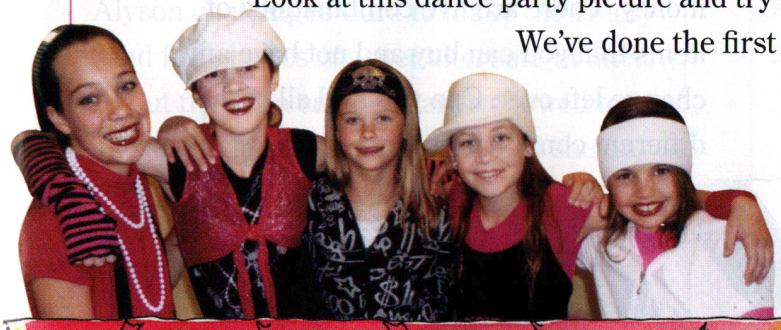
I G R F S I C E C R E A M L A U
Y O I H R T B W Z A B Y S O M J
M L Z F U N R V F H K J Z O E P
A P E K T V K L M R S E J N S L
Q U S Y O S T R E A M E R S F R
S I Y M P C T O Z P M R G N B I

Photo Fun

Look at this dance party picture and try to figure out which girl is which! We've done the first clue for you.

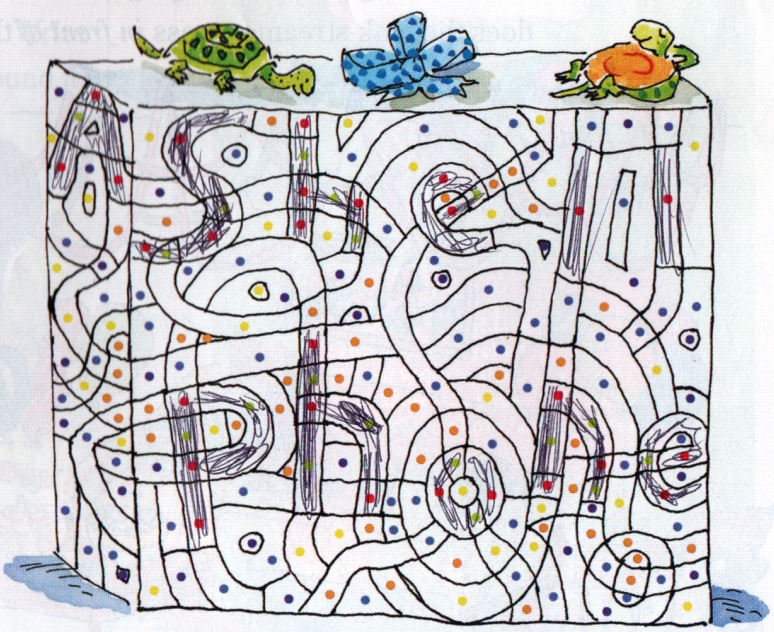


- ✓ Aislinn is wearing a white necklace.
- ✓ Elizabeth is not wearing a hat.
- ✓ Alexandra is wearing arm warmers.
- ✓ Kristin is not wearing pink.
- ✓ Georgi is wearing a black tank top.

no	no	yes	no	no	**Kristin**
no	no	no	no	yes	**Elizabeth**
yes!	no	no	no	no	**Aislinn**
no	no	no	yes	no	**Georgi**
no	yes	no	no	no	**Alexandra**

Present Puzzler

Fill in the shapes that contain a **pink** or **green** dot to answer this joke:
What did the turtle get for her birthday?



Illustrations: Paul Meisel

Mall Matchup

For your birthday party, you and your friends go on a scavenger hunt at a store. You have $30 to spend on four separate items, and you have to spend all of the money. There are five combinations of items that you can buy and not have any change left over. Can you find all of the different combinations?

Decoration Frustration

Ella went a little crazy with party streamers! Check out the tangled mess hanging from the ceiling. How many times does the pink streamer cross *in front of* the green streamer?

Cup Stumper

Alyson challenges Cara to make the empty and full glasses of water alternate in line. But there's a catch—Cara's allowed to move only one glass. What should she do?

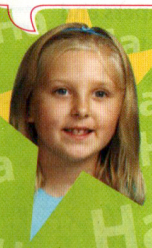
You can set up this brain bender with real glasses of water and let your friends solve it!

Art Sleuth

Search the pages of our birthday issue to find where each snippet of a photo or illustration shown below came from. Write down the page number where you found it.

Laffateria

What state makes the best cake?



Whisk-onsin.

Cassidy D.
Age 9, Wisconsin

Why did the girl hit her birthday cake with a hammer?

Because her friend said it was a pound cake.

Julie B.
Age 11, California

Why did the girl eat her homework?

Her teacher said it was a piece of cake.

MiKayla K.
Age 12, California

Funny Business

Send your best joke to Brain Waves! Write to the address on page 2. Include your name, birth date, school photo, and signature.

According to one study, the most common birth date in the United States is October 5, and the least common is May 22.

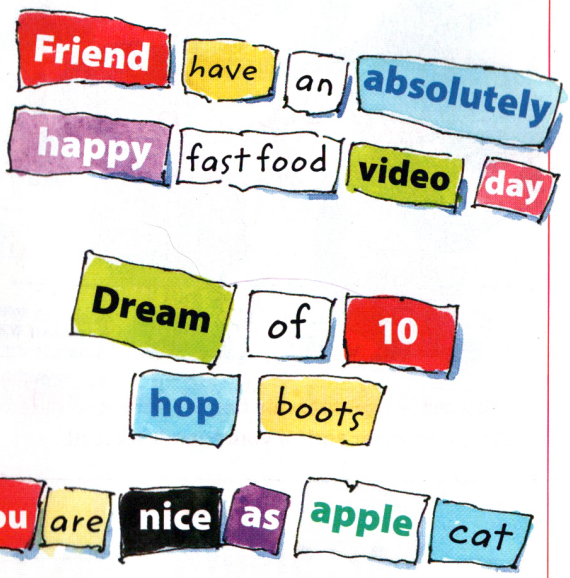
What's the Word?

Oh, no! You forgot to buy a birthday card for your friend, so you'll have to make one yourself. The trouble is, you don't know what to write. Play this game to figure it out.

1. Cut out about 50 words or phrases from old newspapers and magazines. (Don't forget to include verbs and little words like *an*.)

2. Put the words into a bowl and scramble them.

3. Then pick out ten words and see if you can make a funny birthday greeting.



You can play alone or compete with a friend to see who can put together the funniest greeting!

Answer Box

Take the Cake

Present Puzzler

Answer: A shell phone

Photo Fun

From left to right, the girls are Aislinn, Alexandra, Kristin, Georgi, and Elizabeth.

Mall Matchup

$2+$6+$10+$12=$30
$2+$6+$8+$14=$30
$2+$4+$10+$14=$30
$2+$4+$8+$16=$30
$4 +$6+$8+$12 =$30

Cup Stumper

Cara should pour the water from the second glass into the fifth glass and then return the empty glass to its place.

Buzzword

The buzzword, *jollification*, is on page 22.

Art Sleuth

1. 24; 2. 44; 3. 21

Decoration Frustration

The pink streamer crosses in front of the green streamer 20 times.

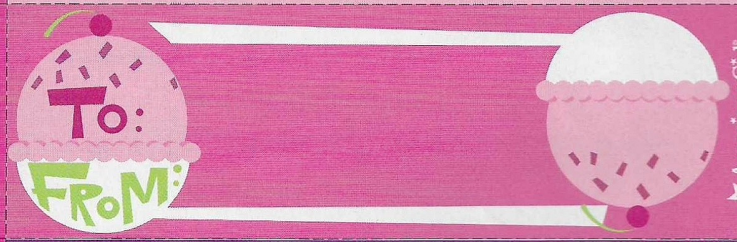
Caring Coupons

Give these sweet valentines to your friends and family!

To:
From:

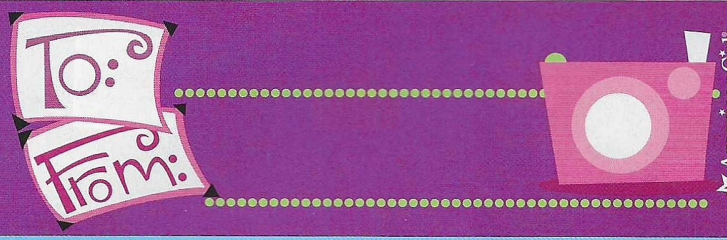
American Girl

Handy Dandy



American Girl

Sweet Treat



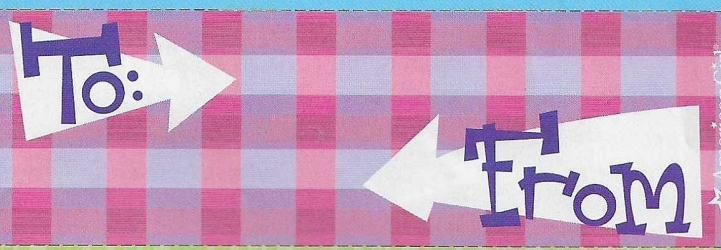
American Girl

Say Cheese

To:
From:

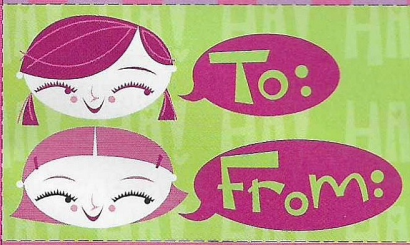
American Girl

T.V. Time



American Girl

You Pick It!



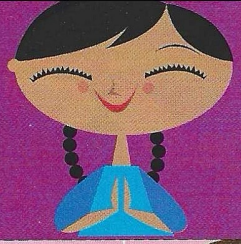
American Girl

Laugh & a Half

American Girl

Beachy Keen

Just **cut** out each coupon along the dotted lines, **fold it in half,** and fill out the **"To"** and **"From"** sections.



Illustrations: Lisa Perrett

This coupon is good for one extra pair of hands. Whether you're **babysitting, cleaning out the garage,** or **folding laundry,** I'll be there to help!

This coupon is good for a **sundae**—any day of the week!

This coupon is good for one photo shoot. Grab a fun outfit and I'll…

- ☑ borrow a camera
- ☑ provide silly props
- ☑ make a backdrop
- ☑ put on a CD and take the photos!

This coupon is good for one night of **good popcorn, great movies,** and our **comfiest pajamas!**

This coupon is good for one time when you get to pick:

- ☐ the movie we watch
- ☐ what game we play
- ☐ whose house we go to
- ☐ the pizza toppings

This coupon is good for the telling of **one funny joke** or **one laugh** at your corny joke!

This coupon is good for **one tropical vacation at my house.** You bring your swimsuit and sunglasses. I'll put out the beach towels, order the pineapple pizza, and rent the summer movies!

HELP!

Dear *American Girl,*

I'm having a birthday party this year, and I want to invite boys, but I am just too scared to ask them! Should I invite boys or not invite boys?

Too Confused

Before you invite anyone to your party—boys OR girls—think about which friends will be the most fun to spend time with. That's who you should invite. Don't ask boys to the party just because they're boys, especially if you'll be worrying about them. But if some of your good friends just happen to be boys, then send them invitations. With your real friends there, you'll have a great party.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

I can't stop spending my allowance. Every time I go to the mall, I buy too much stuff like candy, nail polish, and other junk. Help!

Money Spender

The answer is pretty easy—leave your money at home. Or you could bring only a couple of dollars with you to spend on silly stuff. If you see something more expensive that you really want to buy, wait a few days and see if you're still thinking about it. Chances are, you won't even remember it, and you can save your money for things that are not junk.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

My mom won't let me have my own e-mail address. I really want one, and I know the safety rules on the Internet. But she still says no. What should I do?

E-mail

You need to show your mom that you're mature enough to have your own e-mail address. To do that, you have to share her e-mail address for a while without complaining. After a few weeks, ask her again if you can have your own address on the family's computer—an address that she can access whenever she wants. That way, Mom can keep an eye on what you're doing, but you'll still have your own address. Maybe that's a plan you can both live with.

★

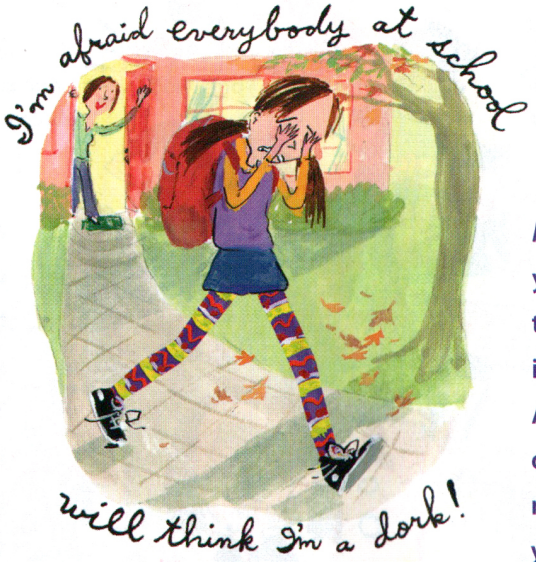
Dear *American Girl,*

I get really frustrated easily, and sometimes I end up yelling at people I love. I'm not sure why it happens, but I have no control over it. How can I stop?

Frustrated in Maryland

First, identify what is frustrating you, then learn to calm yourself down. The next time you start feeling frustrated, stop what you're doing and breathe deeply. Count to ten. Get up and walk around. Clear your mind before you come back to the frustrating task. If you keep a cool head, you'll be less likely to snap at others. And if you do yell at someone? Apologize and admit that it's not that person's fault that you are frustrated. Then calm down and try again.

MORE HELP!



Dear *American Girl,*

My mom bought me new tights with lots of colorful stripes. I'm afraid that everybody at school will think I'm a dork if I wear them. But I don't want to hurt my mom's feelings.

Afraid to stick out

Do *you* like the tights? If so, wear them and show your style. But if you're just going to shove them to the bottom of your drawer, talk to your mom. She doesn't want to waste money on clothes you won't wear. See if you can go shopping together to find clothes you both think are right for you.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

I always agree with my friends about every single thing. How can I learn to say what I *really* think?

Agree, Agree, Agree

It takes a little practice, but you can disagree with your friends without fighting. The trick is to say what *you* think without making your friends feel bad about what *they* think. Let's say they all love a new TV show that you don't like. Saying "I saw it, and it just wasn't for me" is better than saying "I saw it, and it was dumb." You don't have to change their minds to match your opinion, either. Differences make friendships interesting, and respect for each other keeps friendships intact.

★

Dear *American Girl,*

I need help! I say the word *like* way too much. I try to think about what I say before I say it, but *like* just always seems to slip out. One time I said it so much, my teacher was even a little mad at me. What should I do?

Like A Lot

The truth is, no one likes hearing someone say *like* over and over. Thinking about what you're going to say is good, but you also need to *listen* to what you're saying while you talk. Ask your family and friends to give you a signal, such as pointing at you, every time you say *like.* At first, you'll be surprised how often you say it, but you'll become more aware of what comes out of your mouth. Speak slowly, and don't be afraid to have pauses in your conversation. You *can* kick this habit!

★

Advice from You

"When you're having hard times with friends or people you love, and you're too shy or scared to say something to them, try making a card explaining how you feel. After they have received it, they're sure to be a lot nicer. They may even say they're sorry, too. I tried it, and it worked!"

Mariah S.
Age 12, Alaska

Need advice? Got advice? Write:
Help!
***American Girl* magazine**
8400 Fairway Place
Middleton, WI 53562

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Natalie and Fiona helped us design the hairstyles in "Hair You'll Love."

REAL girl of the year AWARD 2008 ™

It's time for another Real Girl of the Year contest! For details, go to americangirl.com/contest in January.

Behind the Scenes

For 15 years, American girls have made this magazine great!

Here are questions like the ones Marki answered from the show *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?* For answers, look to the credits at the left of this page.

4th-grade math:

Kevin took a test that had 150 questions, and he got 92 percent of them correct. How many questions did he answer correctly?

138 **100** **112**

4th-grade science:

Pollen is produced in which part of the flower?

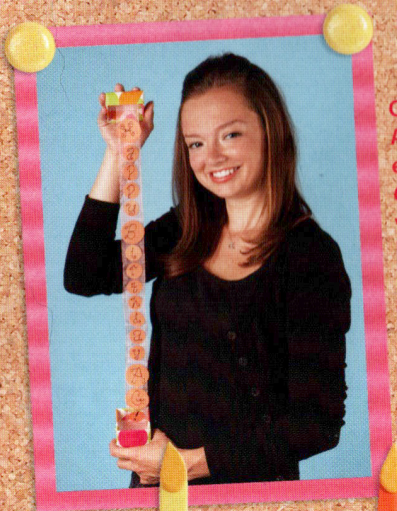
Pistil **Petal** **Stamen**

4th-grade geography:

Crater Lake, the deepest lake in the United States, is in what state?

Utah **Washington** **Oregon**

Go to "Fun for Girls" at americangirl.com to see a video of Sami warming up with a move called "The Octopus" before she hits the ice.



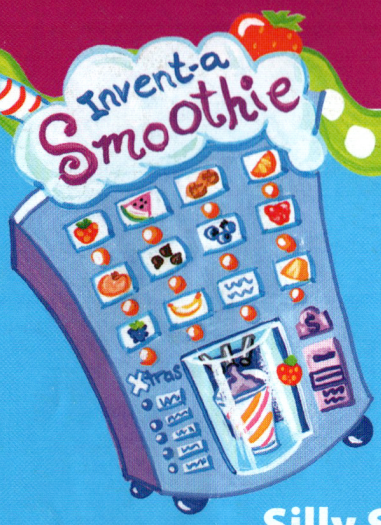
Our Lifestyle Editor, Aubre, read the first-ever issue of *American Girl* magazine when she was 8—now she works here! She chose the winners for the birthday-card contest. Here she is holding a cool contest entry from Samantha F. from Colorado.

Spring Has Sprung

Hatch a batch of adorable spring crafts!

Foolish Food

Surprise your family this April Fools' Day!



American Girl®

Go to americangirl.com and click on "Fun for Girls" for more magazine fun!

Coming up in the March/April issue

Silly Sales

See the crazy things girls dreamed up to sell in vending machines!

For Eyes

Everything you need to know about getting—and having—glasses

Funny Families

Girls share their most embarrassing family moments.

Get It Together!

Tips to help you keep your clutter under control

Illustrations: Carol Yoshizumi

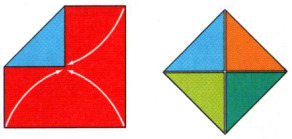
AG's Chatter Boxes

Put these together in time for your sleepover. You can see where you might be in 15 years, learn what might happen at your next party, and ask your friends some fun questions.

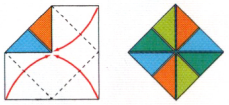
How to fold a Chatter Box

1. Cut out one square. Fold and unfold it in half diagonally in both directions to make an X. Place the square picture-side down.

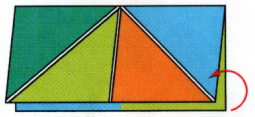
2. Fold each corner point into the center.



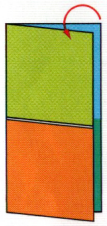
3. Flip so that flaps are facedown. Then fold each corner into the center.



4. Fold in half this way to crease.

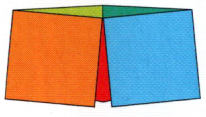


5. Then unfold and fold in half the other way.



6. Stick both thumbs and pointer fingers into the four pockets. Push all the pockets to a point to begin playing.

Pointer fingers go in the back pockets.



Thumbs go in the front pockets.

See other side for how to play!

How to Play

1. Insert your fingers and thumbs under the numbered flaps on the Chatter Box.

2. Ask a friend to choose a number from one of the outside flaps, or choose one yourself. Open and close your fingers that number of times, moving your fingers front to back and then sideways.

3. Have your friend choose one of the words on the inside of the Chatter Box. Spell out the word, opening and closing your fingers with each letter.

4. Have your friend pick one of the words that shows. Open that flap and read the message beneath. ★